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ABSTRACT

The Career Education Center (CEC) is an alternative high school educational program than began in 1989 to serve the needs of adolescents in New York City who are homeless, educationally disadvantaged, do not fit into a traditional high school setting, or who are awaiting foster care placement. The CEC supports these students, bolsters their self-esteem, and sets up alternative learning centers at host agencies to accommodate students. As of September 1993, CEC was serving approximately 1,300 students at 33 sites. Interviews at seven CEC sites with program staff and agency directors were the basis for the 1993-94 evaluation. Students at each site were also interviewed. Overall, the CEC program is found to be highly successful in serving the varied needs of these high-risk students. Classes are small in the CEC program, and teachers are able to assess students' strengths and weaknesses better and more quickly. Student programs are a major strength of the program, as is the smooth working collaboration among personnel. Improvements in student attendance, self-esteem, and academic achievement have been noted. One table and six figures present evaluation findings. (SLD)

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ED 379 390

OER Report

EVALUATION OF
THE CAREER EDUCATION CENTER
(1993-94)

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EVALUATION OF
THE CAREER EDUCATION CENTER
(1993-94)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Career Education Center (CEC) is alternative high school educational program that began operation in September 1989 to serve the needs of adolescents that are homeless, educationally disadvantaged, who do not fit into a traditional high school setting, and/or who are awaiting foster care placement. The goals of the CEC program are to provide support to these students, enabling them to continue their secondary education, bolster their self-esteem, and provide them with a base with which to become law abiding, hard working, and productive citizens. CEC sets up alternative learning centers at host agencies to accomplish these goals. CEC is open to students enrolled in affiliated agencies and programs. Admission to a site varies according to agency requirements and procedures.

CEC has expanded significantly since its inception when it was serving two sites and approximately 200 students. As of September 1993, CEC was operating in 33 sites and serving approximately 1300 students. The spending-staffing plan of the CEC program is formula-based. The program is allowed flexibility in how they use the available funds to support the diverse aspects of the program.

During April and May 1994, the Office of Educational Research (OER) conducted interviews with CEC staff including supervisors, coordinators, teachers, and support staff at seven CEC sites throughout the city. These interviews probed for information on the student population, the CEC staff, program structure, and opinions and perceptions on a diverse range of topics. Also interviewed at the sites was the on-site agency director. These interviews explored the history of the agency's involvement with CEC, their roles and responsibilities, and the services they provide for the students. Following the site interviews, the principal of CEC was interviewed in an attempt to summarize and clarify issues that arose during the site visits and to get a general site-independent overview of CEC. OER also conducted interviews with a group of three students at each site. The evaluation was designed to obtain the broadest possible look at the implementation of the CEC program. OER also requested that the CEC personnel responsible for student information complete end-of-the-year forms pertaining to students.

Overall, the CEC program is a highly successful alternative educational program serving the needs of adolescents, who for a variety of reasons are in need of such services. The majority of CEC staff have long and extensive backgrounds in education and are seasoned teaching professionals who are able, because of their abilities to work with special populations of adolescents to help them succeed. Classes are significantly smaller in the CEC program; teachers are therefore better and more quickly able to assess their students' strengths and weaknesses. This facilitates individualizing the curriculum to better meet the

needs of all students and providing learning experiences which result in academic success.

As a program, CEC has many strengths, one of which is the programs and activities developed for students. One such program is the School Business Collaborative program in which CEC has formed collaborations with an extensive array of businesses, community-based organizations, and other outside agencies. These collaboratives are part of CEC's philosophy that students are better educated and better served if there is an integration between vocational and academic education. CEC has also developed an extensive cultural arts program which connects with theater groups throughout the city. The goal of the cultural arts program is to increase the quality and effectiveness of CEC's educational programs and to develop curricula focusing on the application of the arts outside of the school setting. In addition, CEC was also one of the first schools to embrace school-based management as part of the SBM/SDM initiative because of their belief that students, parents, community, outside agencies, and business partners all working together will improve the quality of student academic and vocational learning outcomes.

Another major strength of the program is the smooth working collaborations that exist among personnel. These relationships are rooted in a common philosophy and goal regarding the students. CEC staff believe that all children can learn and be successful and that they as teaching professional can help make a difference in students' lives. Much of credit for the success of the CEC program is given to the principal. She is described by her staff as being a dynamic and energetic administrator and is credited with empowering her staff and setting a tone of creativity and collaboration.

Yet another strength of the CEC program is the positive relationships that exist between CEC staff and the on-site agencies. Agency personnel stated that they selected CEC to provide the educational component to their program because of their belief that CEC educators could best serve the students, "experienced city teachers, teaching city kids." This relationship has proven to be crucial to the success of the CEC program and to the success of the students.

Another strong point is the good working relationship between the CEC program and the Alternative High School Superintendent's Office. According to the CEC principal, the superintendent demonstrates his support of CEC by giving them the room to be creative and by approving the programs they've developed.

Staff believe program success is evidenced by the increasing numbers of students obtaining their G.E.D.s or receiving their high school diplomas, improving their mathematics

and reading scores, going on to postsecondary education or advanced career training, obtaining permanent employment, and receiving permanent housing. Perhaps the most significant improvement noted is the increase in attendance. Improvements in self-esteem and attitudes were also observed. While student measures of project success were foremost mentioned, morale is reportedly extremely high among CEC staff members.

Overwhelmingly, agency and CEC staff asserted that students' attitudes towards the CEC program are very positive. This is attributed to the high quality of the relationships between the students and the staff.

The majority of students stated that they would complete their high school education in the CEC program, believing the environment to be more conducive to learning than they previously experienced in a traditional high school setting. Students also had clear and ambitious goals for their futures.

Another indication of the success the students are experiencing in the CEC program is in the increase in their participation in activities and events. They reported receiving more job training; participating in more computer-assisted instructional activities; attending more cultural arts and after-school events, while at CEC than they did prior to CEC.

In general, the quantitative student data presented a similar picture to the opinions and perceptions. Attendance was quite high and stable during the time frame investigated. In addition over 50 percent of the students who have taken the exam have passed. This is true of all R.C.T. subject areas. In the 1993-94 school year, a similar number of students had passed the G.E.D. exam as had passed in the previous year. Three students were reported to have earned their high school diplomas.

An admitted short-coming in both the CEC program and in the agencies is the lack of long-term follow-up on the students/clients. This is primarily due to the lack of resources, both in personnel and funding that are available for this kind of service.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, OER offers recommendations that underscore successful program practices and the problem areas that need to be addressed. However, it should be recognized that the resolution of some of these problems is not within CEC's power but must be addressed by the appropriate agency/bureaucracy and/or is dependent on additional funding. OER makes the following recommendations with these constraints in mind:

- Continue to establish collaboratives with outside agencies, businesses, and community-based

organizations. The present extensive collaboratives have significantly improved student academic performance, self-esteem, and behaviors.

- Continue facilitating the positive working relationships and collaborations among CEC staff and between the CEC program and agency personnel. This can be accomplished through staff/agency development days, cultural arts events, and program-wide activities, such as the yearly multicultural event.

- Improve the notification to students of G.E.D. test results. CEC and the individual agencies should work in conjunction with the State Education Department to help facilitate this process.

- Improve follow-up procedures in conjunction with the individual agencies on students who have completed the program. Knowledge about how former students are faring on their own would be invaluable to future implementation and might help to insure sustained success.

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I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Career Education Center (CEC) is an alternative high school educational program that began operation in September 1989 to serve the needs of adolescents that are homeless, educationally disadvantaged, who do not fit into a traditional high school setting, and/or who are awaiting foster care placement. The goals of the CEC program are to provide support to these students, enabling them to continue their secondary education, bolster their self-esteem, and provide them with a base with which to become law abiding, hard working, and productive citizens. This specifically involves assisting students who are living in hotels and shelters, returning non-attending students to their school of register, securing placements for students not so returning, monitoring student progress, and providing credit-bearing General Education Diploma (G.E.D.) preparation, basic literacy courses, and "hands-on" vocational programs. CEC sets up alternative learning centers at host agencies to accomplish these goals. One staff member asserted, "We want to help create success-oriented learners." The principal of CEC further explained, "CEC has a humanistic philosophy. We believe that every child should be able to fulfil his or her own potential. Every child can learn."

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

CEC has expanded significantly since its inception when it was serving two sites and approximately 200 students. As of September 1993, CEC was operating in 33 sites, serving

approximately 1300 students, including seven Human Resources Administration (H.R.A.)* field offices and teen centers throughout the City. CEC is open to students enrolled in affiliated agencies and programs. Admission to a site varies according to agency requirements and procedures. Some students are referred by the courts or by other social service institutions for transitional education. Each CEC learning center is administered by a supervisor; an on-site coordinator; one or more teachers and paraprofessionals, depending on the number of students served by the site; and by on-site agency personnel.

The spending-staffing plan of the CEC program is formula-based. In addition to basic support, the funding for CEC comes from a variety of different sources including tax-levy** and Chapter 1***/Pupils with Compensatory Educational Needs (P.C.E.N.) funds****, which they are allowed to commingle; special education money; and an Attendance Improvement and

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*The Human Resources Administration (H.R.A.) is a city agency that oversees welfare (including income maintenance and general social services), child protective services, and homelessness.

**Tax-levy funds are provided by New York City.

***Chapter 1 is a federal funding source. Eligibility is based on a complex formula using the proportion of a school's students who either qualify for the free lunch program, or are members of families eligible for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (A.F.D.C.).

****Pupils with Compensatory Educational Needs (P.C.E.N.) provides New York State funding for high school students in need of remediation in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Dropout Prevention (AIDP) budget*. CEC is allowed flexibility in how they use these funds to support the diverse aspects of the program. The budget is formulated to provide a student/staff ratio of approximately 16 to 20 students to one teacher and one paraprofessional. Chapter 1 money targets children in need of remedial assistance and the student to staff ratios are slightly lower with 15 students to one teacher and one paraprofessional.

School Business Collaborative

An integral part of CEC is the School Business Collaborative Program in which CEC has formed collaborations with an extensive array of organizations, businesses, community-based organizations, and other outside agencies. These collaboratives are part of CEC's philosophy that students are better educated and better served if there is an integration between vocational and academic education. In maintaining collaboratives with outside agencies, CEC has enlisted the multifaceted services that such organizations provide including student mentoring; job training and placement; internship programs; student services; donations of used equipment, office furniture, and supplies; supplementary funding, etc. The number of collaborations formed has increased dramatically since the inception of the program, to service the ever-expanding and changing needs of the student population.

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*Attendance Improvement and Dropout Prevention (A.I.D.P.) is funding which comes from the state and is targeted for dropout prevention.

Cultural Arts Program

CEC has also developed an extensive cultural arts program which connects with theater groups throughout the city. Some of the activities available to students include tickets to plays, dance, and recitals; trips to museums; Plays for Living*, participation in theater workshops, to name but a few. The goal of the cultural arts program is to increase the quality and effectiveness of CEC's educational programs and to develop curricula focusing on the application of the arts outside of the school setting. There is a cultural arts director who coordinates these activities for the students at all the CEC sites.

Governing of Schools: SBM/SDM

CEC was also one of the first School-Based Management/Shared Decision Making (SBM/SDM)** schools in the city because of their belief that students, parents, staff, community, outside agencies, and business partners all working together will improve the quality of student academic and vocational learning outcomes. The team manages and sets guidelines for the CEC program, and members serving on the team include teachers, students, parents, paraprofessionals, school secretaries, social service personnel,

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*Plays for Living is an ensemble of five or six actors that put on plays about problems and situations that are encountered everyday. Play topics have included AIDS, prejudice, teen stress, and literacy. A follow-up group discussion takes place after the performanceS where students can comment on the play and talk about their concerns.

**Schools become SBM/SDM schools by writing a plan for school-based management and fulfilling particular program criteria.

business partners, and school administrators. The supervisors of each site bring the concerns and/or needs of their site(s) to the attention of the SBM/SDM team, where decisions are made and issues are addressed regarding the individual sites and the general functioning of the CEC program. Participation in SBM/SDM has allowed the individual sites to achieve their instructional goals.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

During April and May 1994, the Office of Educational Research (OER) conducted interviews with CEC staff including supervisors, coordinators, teachers, and support staff. Also interviewed at the sites was the on-site agency director. The sites visited were selected by the CEC principal and an assistant principal as representative of the various types of programs currently implemented by CEC. The interviews with CEC staff probed for information on the student population, the CEC staff, program structure, and staff opinions and perceptions. Student information included referral sources, enrollment procedures, services available, and characteristics of the student body. Staff information included their personal histories in education and how they came to the CEC program; their roles and responsibilities; and the staff development and technical assistance they have received. OER was also interested in obtaining information about program structure including the curriculum and organization of CEC at the different sites, the interconnections between the programs and SBM/SDM, and the

agencies and collaboratives affiliated with each site. Staff perceptions and opinions were also explored on a diverse range of topics including factors which they felt had impeded and facilitated program success, changes needed in the program, important measures of project success, and their feelings about how students regard the CEC program and the services that it provides. The interviews with the agency director explored the history of the agency's involvement with CEC, their roles and responsibilities, and the services they provide for the students, and their perceptions and opinions on student attitudes and behavior. Following the site interviews, the principal of CEC was interviewed in an attempt to summarize and clarify issues that arose during the site visits and to get a general site-independent overview of CEC.

OER also conducted interviews with a group of three students at each site focusing on such topics as students' experiences at the site; the extent of their participation both before coming to a CEC site and while at CEC including job training programs, computer-assisted instructional activities, cultural arts activities, and after-school activities; and long-term educational and/or work-related goals, All interviews were open-ended to allow for greater exploration of the issues.

OER also requested that the CEC personnel responsible for student information complete end-of-the-year forms pertaining to students. Information collected included date of enrollment,

attendance data, program status, work status, and whether the student is a parent.

SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

This report summarizes the findings from the interviews conducted with staff members, students, and agency personnel at the seven visited sites. Chapter II presents individual descriptions of the sites visited. Roles and responsibilities of both CEC staff and agency personnel are discussed in Chapter III along with other pertinent staff information. Chapter IV explores the perceptions of program staff and finally, Chapter V presents student outcome data. Evaluators' conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter VI.

II. DESCRIPTIONS OF SITES VISITED

OER visited seven sites throughout the city, each with its own unique qualities and programs. The sites that were visited were selected by the CEC principal and an assistant principal and were representative of the wide range of CEC programs. While each site is distinctive, they do, however, share some commonalities, which are discussed below.

COMMONALITIES AMONG THE SITES

Student Educational Histories

While the exact set of life circumstances which lead a particular student to a CEC site may vary, their educational histories are remarkably similar across sites. They are described as truants, drop-outs, or "at-risk," for reasons which include drug addiction, teen pregnancy, incarceration, and psychiatric/psychological problems. As to be expected, these students come to CEC with a wide range of abilities; while some are described as being barely literate and functioning well below grade level, others are working at or slightly above grade level.

Monitoring and Encouraging Attendance

Another similarity observed among sites concerns the monitoring and encouraging of attendance. While some of the specifics varied from site-to-site, in part because of agency mandates/requirements, all sites report that attendance is regularly taken by use of the "red book." Personnel report that the agency and the CEC staff both monitor attendance, each informing the other of student absences. All sites report high

attendance levels which they attribute to the fact that many students live on-site. Since most of the students had not been attending school on a regular basis before their participation at a CEC learning center, all sites reported extensive methods for encouraging attendance. Some of those mentioned included special trips, participation in activities, tee-shirts, awards, and special privileges. Moreover, personnel at all the sites asserted that they create a positive atmosphere in their classrooms which they feel promotes regular attendance. CEC also coordinates its drop-out prevention program with the efforts of attendance improvement teams of its host agencies.

Parent Involvement

Unsurprisingly, at most of the CEC sites, parent involvement is described as being quite low, if it occurs at all (one exception is The Adolescent Alternative Day Program). Many of the students are parents themselves and for diverse reasons, are no longer living with their own parents. Several students, especially at the sites that serve older students, are legally-designated "heads of household." Some sites report that parents are informed about upcoming events, conferences, and SBM/SDM meetings (e.g. South Bronx Job Corps and Gateway Job Corps). A few sites reported establishing a separate committee to get parents involved, although in general these efforts have been unsuccessful.

Uniqueness of The CEC Sites

OER asked staff to consider the unique aspects of their program. Sites consistently answered that the most unique quality of their program is the extremely positive working relationships that exist between their personnel and agency personnel which they further asserted are "built around the needs of the students." In the words of one supervisor, "At our site there is a perfect marriage between the agency people and the Board of Education people." The principal of the program offered another viewpoint, commenting, "The enthusiasm and boundless energy of the CEC staff [are important]." She further stated that they make a difference in the lives of students, they are a very talented and committed group of professionals." CEC coordinators, teachers, and support staff in turn credit the principal's administrative style as a unique quality of their program, part of which is her support of the SBM/SDM team. Several staff members further mentioned that the principal empowers the teachers, and in turn, her staff feel more in control and more creative.

The Use of Alternative Assessment

Because the student populations that are served at each CEC site have different needs and different abilities, supervisors report that alternative assessment techniques and individualized instruction are integral parts of program functioning. Upon admission to a site, students are extensively tested, a process which assesses the students' educational level and requirements

along with other needs (e.g., social services and social and emotional needs). CEC and agency personnel stated that they use portfolios extensively for all of the students as a way of charting progress and determining student educational needs. Available to all sites are support services from various resident CEC experts including a psychologist/college advisor, a computer specialist, and an HIV/AIDS team.

Extracurricular Activities

CEC students are offered a wide range of extracurricular activities which are provided by both CEC and the separate agencies. Activities include tickets for plays, concerts, the circus, and movies; participation in the LaMama theater workshops; multicultural events; sports activities; computer workshops; woodworking; single-parenting groups; business and life-related workshops; and student government, just to name a few. At many sites the agencies have established extensive sports programs for the residents.

INDIVIDUAL SITE DESCRIPTIONS

Following are individual descriptions of each site visited in an attempt to demonstrate each site's unique aspects. Table 1 presents demographical information on students at each site. The information included in this table was compiled in the course of OER's interviews with the CEC supervisor at each site.

The Adolescent Alternative Day Program (AADP)

AADP is a partnership between St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital and CEC. The site serves students with psychiatric disorders

Table 1

Demographics of the CEC Sites Visited
1993-94

DEMOGRAPHICS	SITES						
	AADP	CROSSROADS	GATEWAY JOB CORPS	SARATOGA	SOUTHERN NY RESIDENTIAL	SOUTH BRONX JOB CORPS	WEST END
Number of students served	22	50	250	100	100	260	25
# of pre-G.E.D. students	0	0	170	40	0	78	4
# G.E.D. Students	0	0	80	60	0	156	21
# H.S. diploma students	all	all	0	0	all	26	0
Age range	14-17	16-21	16-22	18-21	14-17	16-21	16-21
Gender							
# of male students	12	40	125	0	100	156	0
# of female students	10	10	125	100	0	104	25
Percent living on-site	0	100	82	100	100	87	100
Grade level		N/A*	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A
9th	6				0		
10th	9				100		
11th	4				0		
12th	3				0		
Average time students remain in program (months)	12	6-12	12-24	8-12	4-6	30	8-12
Number of discharges	6	10	50	16	N/A**	75	8
Student:Staff ratio	20:1	15:1	16:1	20:1	17:1	18:1	22:1

*Not applicable. All students at these sites are enrolled in pre-G.E.D. programs or G.E.D. programs, grade level assignment is not used for these students.

**Southern NY Residential Cluster is a transitional facility for young men who are completing their prison-term. They usually come here shortly before release. Therefore, the population is extremely transient and the actual number of discharges could not be determined.

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which are known to be one of the leading causes of truancy in the teenage population. The stated mission of AADP is to create a therapeutic high school setting that addresses the clinical and academic needs of teenagers with psychiatric disorders. The program coordinates services for the students including a full schedule of academic classes; individual, group and creative arts therapy; and medication management. Students also have access to social workers and social service agencies.

Most of the students have been truant and have demonstrated violent and acting-out behavior. Because of their truancy, many of these students have reading and mathematics levels below grade level and this program attempts to get them on-track. The adolescents are typically referred to this program by either St. Luke's/Roosevelt Hospital, another hospital, or a school guidance counselor. Participation in the program involves a long intake process which involves a full assessment of the child's emotional and educational needs. AADP students live at home and travel to the AADP site each day. An agency requirement for admission to this site is active parental involvement.

The instructional philosophy of AADP takes into consideration the special needs of the students by emphasizing activity-centered programming, regular attendance, and the improvement of reading and mathematics levels. This philosophy manifests itself in individualized instruction, where teachers and paraprofessionals work one-on-one with the students to help them achieve grade-level performance. There is an emphasis on

improving students' ability to function in daily life. Daily meetings between the CEC on-site staff and St. Luke's personnel assure that the individual needs of the students/patients are met.

CEC served 22 diploma-tracked students (12 males and 10 females) between the ages of 16 and 21 at AADP during the 1993-94 school year. There were a number of special education-designated students (MIS I and II and SIE VII and VIII)*. Grade level breakdowns can be found in Table 1. The average student remains in the CEC program at AADP for approximately 12 months, at which time some age-out, others move to another facility, and some are returned to their neighborhood high school. There are three CEC staff positions at this site; a coordinator, a teacher, and a paraprofessional. There are approximately 20 students to one teacher at this site.

Crossroads

The Crossroads educational program is a collaboration between the Child Welfare Agency (CWA) and CEC. In a New York court case, Doe v. New York City Department of Social Services, HRA was mandated to provide for the education of children alleged to have been or were adjudicated to have been neglected or

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*MIS (Modified Instructional Services) and SIE (Specialized Instructional Environment) are special education codes. MIS codes are used primarily in community school districts and high schools and SIE Codes are used primarily in District 75 schools. Both MIS I and MIS II students receive basic special education services. MIS II students are also identified as having social needs. SIE VII students have social and emotional needs and SIE VIII students are designated as needing intensive social behavior control.

abused, to be PINS (Persons in Need of Supervision), juvenile delinquents, or who were voluntarily placed in foster care, and/or who have been, are being, or will be held at a Special Services For Children (SSC) field office. Students at this site are considered "at-risk"; many are volatile and have dropped-out of high school. Some have been drug abusers, incarcerated, or discharged from other schools.

Previous to their participation in the CEC educational program at Crossroads, these students did not regularly attend school. Consequently, many of the students are reading and writing significantly below grade level. They are referred to Crossroads by either court mandate, the Board of Education, or by foster home placement services; for many students it is described as their "last resort."

Given the educational histories of these students and their lack of success in mainstream educational institutions, inherent in the instructional philosophy at Crossroads is the raising of students' self-esteem. This is a priority because of the belief that if these students "feel worthy, everything will improve." This philosophy is manifested in instruction through the extensive use of extracurricular activities and artistic consultants, and individualized instruction.

CEC served approximately 50 students (40 males and 10 females) between the ages of 16 and 21 at Crossroads during the 1993-94 school year. Thirty-two of these students were in the G.E.D. program and approximately 17 were receiving special

education (MIS I and II). All students live on-site and remain in the CEC program at Crossroads between six and 12 months, at which time they go on to college and/or trade schools and independent living. There are six CEC staff positions at this site; a coordinator, four teachers, a guidance counselor, and a paraprofessional. The student to staff ratio is approximately 15 students to one teacher.

CEC and CWA also collaborate at two other sites, the Atlantic Avenue HRA and the Hegemen Avenue HRA. Both are large transitional programs similar to Crossroads.

Gateway Job Corps and South Bronx Job Corps

The educational programs at the Gateway Job Corps and the South Bronx Job Corps are collaborations between CEC and the Federal Job Corps program. They are recognized as outstanding and innovative educational programs serving minority, and educationally disadvantaged adolescents. Students are frequently referred to one of these Job Corps programs by courts and social workers however, many students indicated that they had heard or had seen advertisements about Job Corps and applied at a recruitment office*. The students are described by staff as being at-risk and unable to succeed in a large traditional high school environment. Many are drop-outs from other programs, have completed only a small number of credits, are young mothers; some have been described as experiencing "a brush with the law."

*The South Bronx Job Corps does the recruitment for the Gateway Job Corps.

Upon entering a Job Corps, students are required to take a federally-mandated test, the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). This test establishes a baseline proficiency level for each student and helps ensure proper placement in the educational programs. Adult basic education tests are administered every six weeks to monitor student progress and route students through to the proper level. At both sites there are educational components which are mandated by Job Corps such as a graded-reading program. Job Corps students are offered a wide range of programs and services such as recreational programs, counseling services, food services, medical care, money for clothing, and "hands-on" vocational training.

The average student remains in the program between two and 2½ years, after this time some continue on in the government Advanced Career Training Program (ACT). City, state, and federal workers comprise the staff at these two sites and the student to staff ratio averages 17 students to one teacher. In addition, both programs are active in the CEC School Business Collaborative Program.

Gateway. Gateway Job Corps is one of two Job Corps in the country which sits on a natural park. Horticultural, park rangers, and environmental studies programs are part of the curriculum offered at this site. The goals at Gateway are to provide each students with the skills to enable them to gain employment, develop life skills, interact with others and

increase their self-esteem. To help insure this outcome, staff stated that they constantly provide feedback and reinforcement.

The instructional philosophy as stated by the site coordinator is that, "There is no limit to what students can do." This philosophy is manifested in one-on-one instruction and group lessons. Gateway offers students an extensive variety of hands-on vocational programs including carpentry, building and ground maintenance (BAM Program), cement masonry, culinary arts and building restoration.

CEC served 250 students ranging in age from 16 to 22 (half of these are male and half female) at the Gateway Job Corps during the 1993-94 school year. Approximately 170 were enrolled in the pre-G.E.D. program and 80 were in the G.E.D. program.

A unique aspect of the program at Gateway is the adoption of the Normative Culture Program, modeled after the program implemented at the Glen Mills School for Boys. It is based on a peer pressure-type model, where very clearly defined dress and behavior codes are reinforced. The staff also credit the extensive cultural arts program for the improvements they see in their students, as one staff member explained, "We expose them to many different activities which help change their way of thinking."

South Bronx Job Corps. The South Bronx Job Corps is nationally recognized as one of the more innovative and successful programs of its kind and has served as a template on which many other such programs throughout the country are

modelled. The goal of the CEC program at the South Bronx Job Corps is to assist adolescents in becoming productive citizens and in learning to lead productive lives. One staff member interviewed expressed this goal when he said, "They [the students] are taught how to go from tax-takers to tax-payers."

The instructional philosophy at the South Bronx Job Corps is to provide the students with hands-on training and new experiences that they have not previously had. It is also described by the staff as specifically job-related. The coordinator stated, "The instruction is geared to achievable goals." He further asserted that "we adapt ourselves and our teaching methods to the kids. We want to teach them everything they need to know." Instruction revolves around work activity centers and is very individualized. There is a philosophy at the South Bronx Job Corps in which learning and participation in activities should be <u>both</u> mental and physical. Further, as one teacher stated, "it is very important that these kids experience success, we help them do just that."

The hands-on vocational programs at the South Bronx Job Corps are the most extensive of all the programs evaluated and include culinary arts, nurse's assistant, typing, carpentry, plumbing, electric repair, and building maintenance programs.

CEC served approximately 260 students, 156 males and 104 females, between the ages of 16 and 21 at the South Bronx Job Corps during the 1993-94 school year. Seventy-eight of these

students are in the pre-G.E.D. program, 156 are in G.E.D. classes, and 26 are high school diploma-tracked students.

A unique aspect of the program, called the World of Work teaches the students about all aspects of the working world such as, how to dress appropriately for the job, how to talk to superiors, how to budget salaries, and how to pay taxes.

The Saratoga Interfaith Family Inn

The CEC program at the Saratoga Interfaith Family Inn is a multidimensional learning program housed in a tier II shelter facility and is one of several such collaborations between CEC and the organization "Homes for the Homeless." It serves homeless mothers who have been through the city shelters. The goal of this program as stated by the coordinator is, "For students to accomplish something here and accomplish something in the real world" and to provide them with experiences so that they "learn that they can be successful." Once mothers enter the residence, they are informed by the agency about the existence of the on-site educational programs available. The clients under 21 years of age are required by the agency to attend the learning center daily and participation for those over 21 is voluntary. (The coordinator however, requires that voluntary students enter into a "contract" of participation. In this contract they must indicate the number of days/hours that they plan on coming to the learning center.) While at the learning center, the women can prepare to take the G.E.D. exam and/or receive computer-skills

training. Day-care for the children is provided to afford the women the freedom to participate at the learning center.

The educational histories of the women are varied. Many dropped-out of school at an early age, predominately because they were pregnant. Some come to the facility with a high school diploma and take advantage of the computer training available in the hopes that this will make them more marketable.

The instructional philosophy, as stated by the program coordinator is, "You will get as much out of my program as you put in." She further added, "I motivate and push them, but they have to take responsibility for their own lives."

During the 1993-94 school year, approximately 100 women between 18 and 35 years of age participated at the learning center. The women remain in the program at the Saratoga between 8 and 12 months. The Saratoga is a one-teacher site where there is both individualized instruction and group activities.

One of the unique factors at this site is the state-of-the-art computer laboratory which provides students with programs in basic and advanced typing, word processing and desktop publishing, and G.E.D. preparation. Many of the computers have been provided by donations from corporations. The computerized system allows students to work on level-appropriate materials based on their individual abilities and to work on and master skills at their own pace.

Southern New York Residential Cluster

The educational program at the Southern New York Residential Cluster is a collaboration between CEC and the Division for Youth (DFY) of the State of New York. Young males between the ages of 14 and 17 are placed at this facility by the courts to finish out their sentences of incarceration. It is a transitional facility and because of this, the population is very transient with an average stay at Southern New York Residential Cluster of only four months before release. The goal of the program is for students to continue their education in a "fluid and smooth manner."

Similar to other sites, there are wide individual differences in the educational histories and abilities of the young men at the Southern New York Residential Cluster. Some are described as being barely literate, while others are functioning at grade-level. In addition, it is believed that the majority of these students have had their educational experience provided by the DFY State educational programs. All are described as having low self-esteem. Therefore, the instructional philosophy as stated by the supervisor, is to "improve students' self-esteem, so that learning can take place." As one teacher indicated, staff attempt to "touch the humanity of these students," and "expose them to success." Also importantly, the staff attempt to teach them to respect themselves and others and to learn to value themselves as special beings. Individualized instruction is reported to be extensively used.

During the 1993-94 school year, CEC served 100 males at the Southern New York Residential Cluster, all of whom were high school diploma-tracked during the 1993-94 school year. There were approximately 17 students to one teacher at this site.

Unfortunately, because the young men are still incarcerated, participation in the CEC cultural arts program is at a minimum. Students that are approaching release are occasionally granted permission to take part in events. Extracurricular activities include visits from the CEC art teacher, recreational programs, an on-site library, and computer workshops.

West End Intergenerational Residence

West End Intergenerational Residence (WIR) is an innovative group home, consisting of 54 adolescent mothers and 40 senior citizens, all of whom were formerly homeless. Catholic Charities of the New York Archdiocese and a host of other agencies established the program four years ago. Together, they formed additional collaborations which would benefit the residents. One of these collaborations was with CEC. CEC staff and agency personnel believe this program is especially unique because of its intergenerational aspect and the myriad of support services that are available to the residents. In order to be eligible for placement at WIR, the young mothers must be single with up to two children, receiving public assistance, and had to have declared themselves homeless to a HRA.

Students are required by the agency to take educational or vocational training courses. Students also receive career

counseling, day-care, and housing placement. Individualized programs that focus on independent living skills, G.E.D. instruction, job training, and advanced educational training enable the mothers to "move from homelessness to self-sufficiency." The agency provides housing, guidance services, a social worker, a health clinic, and the LYFE program*.

The educational histories of the women at WIR were described by the supervisor as consisting of drop-outs and "at-risk" students. At program inception, the educational component was established by Fordham University's Graduate School of Education and CEC and took place at Fordham University. This was done in the hope that the women would enjoy the college atmosphere and perhaps would want to continue their education at Fordham University once they completed their high school education. The educational component was eventually moved on-site because the women reported having difficulties arranging their schedules so that they could attend classes and pick their children up from the day-care center at the time prescribed by the agency. An on-site educational program better served their needs and situations.

The instructional philosophy at this site is to maximize student-centered learning. This is accomplished by one-on-one

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*LYFE (Living for Young Families through Education) is an innovative program started by the New York City Board of Education's Division of High Schools, in an effort to lower the student dropout statistics by providing day-care facilities for children of adolescent parents, who are between the ages of 2 months to 2.9 years.

tutorials and teacher-directed lessons. Attendance is monitored by the teacher in conjunction with agency and pupil personnel. Student receive a wake-up call from the agency staff to assure their attendance.

During the 1993-94 school year, CEC provided G.E.D. education to 25 women between the ages of 16 and 21. Twenty-one of the women were in the G.E.D. program and four were in the pre-G.E.D. program. The average student at WIR remains in the CEC program between eight months and one year. WIR is a one-teacher site.

IV. STAFF PERCEPTIONS

The interviews conducted by OER also explored staff perceptions and opinions of the implementation and operations of CEC at the different sites including types of staff development received, relationship with the superintendent's office, factors believed to have facilitated and impeded the functioning of the program, the most important measures of project success, and changes needed in the CEC program. The principal was also asked to expound on the future implementation plans of CEC and the kinds of advice she would give other educators starting a program such as CEC.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Many of the CEC staff are veteran teachers and as such, have participated in all kinds of staff development activities over the years. Therefore, many of them didn't feel they needed any specific staff development workshops nor did they report participating in any to help them with their proje -related responsibilities at CEC. However, one supervisor who started her career in education with CEC spoke about the initial training she received, "At CEC they took me by the hand. The principal gave me the opportunity to go to all kinds of training that I found interesting and which helped me."

OER asked CEC personnel to describe the types of staff development and support they have received, the list is comprehensive. As one supervisor stated, "At CEC there have been workshops on a variety of subjects. I can tap into so many

different technical programs." The reported technical assistance received by each constituent group was similar with a few exceptions.

All CEC staff reported receiving the following types of staff development and support: assistance from the CEC principal and support staff, a staff development day on conflict resolution, a multicultural event, meetings with the agency, and informal discussions with colleagues. Supervisors who are also functioning as assistant principals mentioned attending administrators' workshops provided by the central Board of Education, the CEC principal, and the superintendency. Coordinators noted the weekly visits from their site supervisor, and teachers noted the constant support from their site's coordinator.

While all these forms of support were deemed helpful, CEC staff suggested specific types of support that they found <u>most</u> helpful and, mentioned types of assistance they would like to continue receiving. Most of the staff stated that the constant support and assistance they received from the CEC principal was invaluable. Other frequently mentioned forms of support included: assistance from the computer specialist, the college advisor, the cultural arts coordinator, and the CEC staff development day. Coordinators specifically mentioned that the weekly visits and meetings with their site supervisor were tremendously helpful. One coordinator reported that regular meetings with the agency were important to the functioning of the

program and stated, "Through these meetings we learn how to depend on one another and what to expect from each other."

In general, staff indicated that they would like to continue to receive all the assistance that they presently receive. The staff also specifically requested continued assistance from the principal and CEC office staff. Still others would like to see a continuation of the informal sharing and meetings that take place between CEC staff. As one supervisor stated, "I would like to continue to get together with my colleagues to share and compare. I would like to keep in contact with others who can give me feedback on whether I am going in the right direction." One coordinator at a site where students are receiving G.E.D. instruction stated that she would like to be kept abreast of state rules and regulations pertinent to G.E.D. instruction and testing. Not surprisingly, many teachers stated that they would like more books and supplies for their classrooms.

CEC'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE H.S. SUPERINTENDENCY

OER asked the principal of CEC to describe the relationship that exists between CEC and the Alternative High School and Program's Superintendent's office. She conveyed that the relationship works extremely well, and that the superintendent is very supportive of the CEC program. The principal indicated that the superintendent has a reputation for empowering the principals. In addition, she noted, he gives them the room to be creative and supports many of the programs they've developed. When asked specifically to cite the ways in which the

superintendent demonstrates his support of the CEC program, the principal listed the following; he attends functions, provides technical assistance, helps them to network with resources, and notifies them of potential sources of support (e.g. notification of grants available.) She also credited the staff at the superintendent's office, "The superintendent has a staff that always has an answer to our questions."

FACTORS FACILITATING AND IMPEDING PROJECT SUCCESS

Overwhelmingly, staff felt that the key facilitating factor to their success has been the positive relationships they have had with the agencies. As one supervisor stated, "It's been a successful marriage with mutual respect between both agencies." One supervisor attributed the good working relationship to the fact that, "We both have the same agenda that is, the education of the students." Another facilitating factor is the support that staff feel they receive from the CEC administration. As one supervisor stated, "there is a constant dedication from the administrative staff and the SBM/SDM team." A teacher further added, "We are welcomed and encouraged to share our ideas." Another often cited factor was the professionalism of the staff; they work collaboratively with one another, both within a particular site and between sites. As one teacher stated, "We are a faculty of professionals." Another teacher stated, "We've become like a family support group, working together for the students."

Some of the sites spoke about facilitating factors which are specific to their site. For example, the staff at the Saratoga Family Inn felt that the use of computers in G.E.D. instruction was essential to their success. The Adolescent Alternative Day Program specifically cited the integration of the clinical and educational staffs as facilitating their efforts.

Many staff members felt that there were no factors impeding program success. Interestingly, the one impeding factor cited was also mentioned as a facilitating factor, that is, the collaboration with different agencies. As described by one supervisor, "sometimes there is hostility and resentment between the agency personnel and the Board of Education personnel." This had occurred because at times the agency director had asserted authority over the Board of Education staff and rules and regulations of the two agencies sometimes conflict. It should also be mentioned that all the staff members believe that over time and with constant collaboration and communication on the part of both agencies, these problems have been resolved.

Another impeding factor mentioned by a coordinator at one of the women's shelters is the welfare system as it presently exists. According to this coordinator, "The women in this program get more money, benefits, and services while on welfare than they do once they get jobs. Many start at a job making $275 a week, at which time they lose welfare, food stamps, the free apartment, and medicaid." She further stated, "This is a significant impediment to convincing these women to change their

lives around and get a job for this kind of outcome." Also mentioned by staff was insufficient books and equipment, cuts in funding, and bureaucracy.

CHANGES NEEDED IN THE CEC PROGRAM

Overwhelmingly, all interviewed staff believed that no substantial changes are needed in the CEC program, as the principal indicated, "The model works." Several of the staff members would like to see better follow-up procedures put into effect. Once a students leaves a CEC site, quite often their progress/functioning is not known.

Many staff members did express the desire to expand the CEC program, believing that there are many more adolescents that need to be served in this manner, who are currently not getting the help that they deserve. Following the request for program expansion is the perennial request for more money, supplies, and personnel to serve the students better. For example, the staff at the Southern New York Residential Cluster would like to reinstitute a computer-assisted G.E.D. program, the staff at the South Bronx Job Corps would like to expand training in the trades (e.g. automotive repair), and the staff at the Gateway Job Corps would like to have a sufficient supply of textbooks available to enable the students to take the books home with them, something which they are presently unable to do. Another recommended change is more timely notification of G.E.D. results from the State Education Department. Students are assured notification of results within six weeks of taking the exam. In actuality the

process has taken up to three months. This delay is a great inconvenience to students who are either leaving the program for a job or who want to go on to college or trade school.

MEASURES OF PROJECT SUCCESS

Because some of the more traditional ways of measuring project success are not applicable at the majority of CEC sites, OER asked CEC staff what measures they considered to be most indicative of their program's success. The staff listed both quantitative and qualitative indications of success. Quantitative measures included an increased number of students obtaining their G.E.D.s or receiving their high school diplomas, going on to postsecondary education or advanced career training, obtaining permanent employment, and receiving permanent housing. Improvement in reading and mathematics scores as indicated by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) was also mentioned. In addition, as one supervisor noted, "The clearest measure is the incredible surge in attendance, students who had dropped-out or were truant are suddenly attending school everyday." One supervisor also believed that another important indication of project success is the decrease in the number of women having more babies.

Qualitative measures, while more difficult to operationalize and to measure, are no less important than the quantitative measures. These measures focus on the day-to-day encounters that staff have with students. Included are observed increases in self-esteem and general improvement in attitudes. Both are

believed to be fundamental to improvement in attendance, grades, and future plans. As one teacher asserted, "We've been successful when a student becomes a productive part of society, when they function in society in positive ways." Many teachers and coordinators also spoke about students visiting the site to update the staff on how well they have been doing since finishing the program. One teacher felt these visits further demonstrate that, "I did a good job with them."

While the most important measures of project success mentioned focused primarily on students, the principal also indicated other measures related to staff attitudes and behaviors which should not be underestimated. Morale is extremely high among CEC staff. Indication of this, according to the principal, is the fact that, "People are willing to work in impoverished places and they do so without getting burnt out." She further added, "They like going to work." Staff also frequently volunteer to participate in events, activities, clubs, and team supervision.

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

The CEC program is expecting to change and expand in the future. Before the end of the school year the principal reported that she had already received 10 requests for serving new programs/shelters. Since CEC's inception, staff report increasing numbers of students, with a whole constellation of serious problems. The CEC staff believe they have the necessary skills and the commitment to provide an educational component for

these students. The principal also sees an increase in the number of collaborations that are formed between CEC and outside organizations. These collaborations will better help meet the needs of the students. As the principal stated, "As the politicians and the policy-makers focus on the homeless in New York City and on their needs, there will be a bigger role for CEC to fulfill."

ADVICE FOR OTHER EDUCATORS

Because of the unique nature of the CEC program, and the recognition that this kind of program is needed elsewhere in the country, OER asked the principal what advice she would give other educators starting similar programs. She had a number of concrete suggestions. Firstly, she stated, when beginning a program such as this, it is imperative to start small, perhaps with a pilot program. Secondly, she felt it was crucial to research existing programs in order to observe first hand how to set up a program/learning center and how to provide innovative instruction. Finally, she adamantly believed that, when serving these types of students, instruction should not be teacher-dominated but rather should focus on the methods of cooperative and interdisciplinary learning.

V. STUDENT OUTCOME DATA

Information on the success students are experiencing and their attitudes and behaviors came from three sources: CEC staff and agency directors' opinions and perceptions, student interviews, and student data forms completed by CEC staff at the end of the school year.

CEC STAFF AND AGENCY DIRECTORS' OPINIONS AND PERCEPTIONS

Students' Attitudes Towards the CEC Program

Overwhelmingly, agency directors and CEC staff, including supervisors, coordinators, and teachers, asserted that students' attitudes towards the CEC program are very positive. Proof of this positive attitude was evidenced by one coordinator who stated, "These students have a long history of not liking school, while they may still say they don't love school, they are here everyday." This attitude was attributed largely to the high quality of the relationships between the students and the CEC staff. One supervisor offered, "They [the students] receive a great deal of support and caring. This is a very nurturing program." An agency director confirmed this opinion when he maintained, "Kids matter as people to the CEC program and to the teachers here. Teachers respect them and assume they can accomplish things." Staff further believed that this caring attitude translates into improved student achievement. The positive attitudes of students are also attributed to the fact that the CEC program is different from traditional high schools in a number of very important ways. An agency director

summarized these differences when he said, "At CEC the physical environment is more relaxed, the work is self-paced, and the staff focus the students more in general, and on educational goals.

A few staff members believed that initially some students have difficulties adjusting to and are less positive towards the program. As one supervisor explained, "There are a lot of rules and regulations that they need to get accustomed to." However she added, "As time goes on, they realize the benefits and the preparation they are receiving for life."

No respondents reported negative attitudes by students towards CEC, however, one agency director poignantly stated, "The kids understand that they could not be in a regular high school setting and yet sometimes they hunger for it."

Educational and Career Success

Staff were asked to consider the educational and career success of the students. While CEC staff were able to discuss the short-term success of the students, knowledge of long-term successes were limited. An admitted short-coming in both the CEC program and in the agencies is the lack of long-term follow-up on the students/clients. This is primarily due to the lack of resources, both in personnel and funding that are available for this kind of service. Much of the follow-up is on an informal basis and initiated on the part of the students. Staff reported that occasionally former students have returned to a site to report on their progress. In general, staff believed that

students are generally successful after having spent time at a CEC site, because they have been provided with necessary experiences and with a caring and supportive environment--both of which are crucial for success.

As far as short-term outcomes, coordinators believed that as many as 75 percent of the students who are enrolled in the G.E.D. programs do in fact obtain their G.E.D.s. Staff also reported significant improvement in attendance and in Regents Competency Test passing rates. As far as longer-term goals, both CEC staff and the agency directors believed that most students go on to traditional high schools, college, trade schools, permanent housing, and/or full-time employment. For example, one Job Corps supervisor told of the many students in the culinary arts program that have gone on for advanced training. Many have, in fact, been accepted to some prestigious culinary arts programs in the country. However, staff also expressed concern that many students could not sustain the positive advances that they had made while within the protective environment of these programs. Staff believed that some students do not fare as well as they hoped because the students find it difficult to function without the support mechanisms provided by both the CEC program and the agencies. Other staff believed that students who seek full-time employment instead of continuing with their education have had difficulties securing jobs because of the troubled state of the New York City economy.

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Twenty-one students were interviewed, 3 at each site (9 males and 12 females). Ten of these students were G.E.D.-tracked, two were pre-G.E.D.-tracked and 9 were H.S. diploma-tracked students. The average number of times these students reported moving within the last three years was 3.7.

Educational Histories

OER asked students about their educational histories both prior to their participation at a CEC site and while at CEC. Sixty-seven percent of the students indicated that they were enrolled in a high school before coming to CEC. However, 79 percent of these students stated that they did not regularly attend. Half of these students indicated that they were bored with school and "cut" to have "fun with my friends." Other reasons for not attending included being overwhelmed at an overcrowded high school (17 percent), being pregnant and needing to find work (17 percent), having too many problems (17 percent), or requiring hospitalization (8 percent).

Attitudes and Perceptions

The previous chapter discussed students' attitudes towards the CEC program as observed by the CEC and agency staff. In this section, OER directly asked students what they considered to be the best and the worst parts of being in the CEC program. According to students, they most liked the teachers, because they cared and spent time with them often giving them individualized attention (32 percent), and the smaller class sizes (25 percent).

As one student stated, "It is easier for me to know the teachers here and for them to know me." Other students indicated that they liked being able to work at their own level and speed (14 percent), the job training, the G.E.D. preparation, and the day-care that is provided for their children (7 percent each). One student stated, "CEC is giving me a second chance." Still, another student stated that he liked the fact that, "There is no violence here."

The aspects of the program that students found favorable, were also the aspects which they listed as making the educational program at CEC different from other high schools that they've attended. For instance, students indicated that in comparison to other big schools, they got more individualized attention and were in smaller classes at CEC. As one student asserted, "Teachers want to see you succeed. You don't have to ask for help, it's always there." Another student appreciated the flexibility in learning inherent in the computer-assisted G.E.D. instruction at the Saratoga Family Inn. She spoke about experiencing test anxiety in the past and how the structure of this program had alleviated it, saying, "I can do a test when it is just me and the computer. This couldn't be done in the high school I used to go to."

When asked to list negative aspects of the CEC program, 45 percent of the students indicated that there were none. Interestingly, in instances when students did cite negative aspects, it was obvious from their answers that they often could

not distinguish between the services provided by the CEC program and those provided by the agency. For instance, 20 percent of the students indicated that they did not like the food served at a site. While at some of the sites lunches are contributed by the Board of Education, at most sites food is provided by the on-site agency. Still, other criticisms listed with regard to the CEC program could alternatively be interpreted as indicating how positively students viewed the program. For instance, 15 percent of the students were dismayed that the program is short-term and 10 percent wanted a longer school day. Several students indicated however, that they felt that the staff were too intrusive (10 percent). As one student stated, "The teachers are too nosy."

Future Educational and/or Career Success

OER asked students whether they planned to finish their high school education in the CEC program, and about their future career and/or educational aspirations. Eighty-six percent of the students indicated that they planned on finishing their high school education at CEC. One student admitted, "I could not function in another program," and further added, "I learn more things here." The three students that stated they would not finish their education at a CEC site were from the Southern New York Residential Cluster, where students are scheduled for release within a few months after admission to the program.

Students had clear and ambitious goals for their futures. Sixty-six percent of the students interviewed stated that they

wanted to go on to college and have careers as nurses, lawyers, engineers, architects, and computer programmers. Twenty percent of the students indicated that they planned on joining the military, where they also hoped to pursue their college education. One student interviewed could not offer any concrete plans, but stated, "I want to do anything that is successful."

History of Participation in Activities and Events

A priority of the CEC program is to expose students to the widest variety of new experiences, activities, and training possible. CEC staff believe that these experiences may open up a new world for many of the adolescents, and that these experiences, in turn, help them to improve their self images and to function productively in the world.

OER asked students to consider the extent of their experience(s) both prior to their participation in CEC and while at CEC, in the areas of job training, computer experience, cultural arts, and after-school activities. Figures 1 through 4 present the findings from these questions and demonstrate considerable increases in student participation in activities and events after they became a part of a CEC program. Figure 1 summarizes the percentage of students that received job training both before coming to CEC and while at a CEC program. While only 15 percent of the students received job training prior to their enrollment in CEC over 50 percent of the students report receiving job training while attending CEC.

Figure 1

Percentage of Students with Job Training Experiences
Prior to CEC and While at CEC

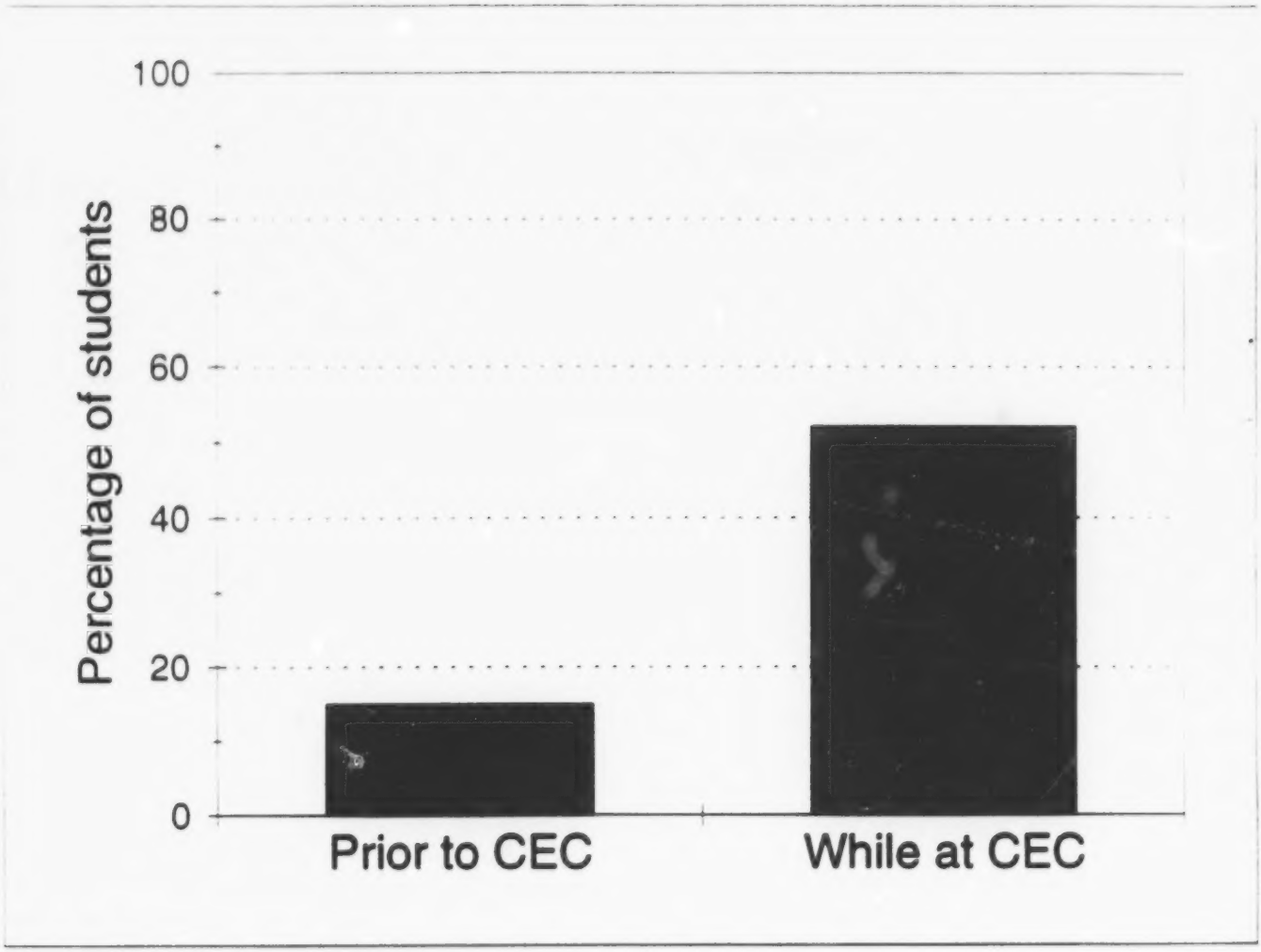


Figure 2

Percentage of Students with Computer Experiences
Prior to CEC and While at CEC

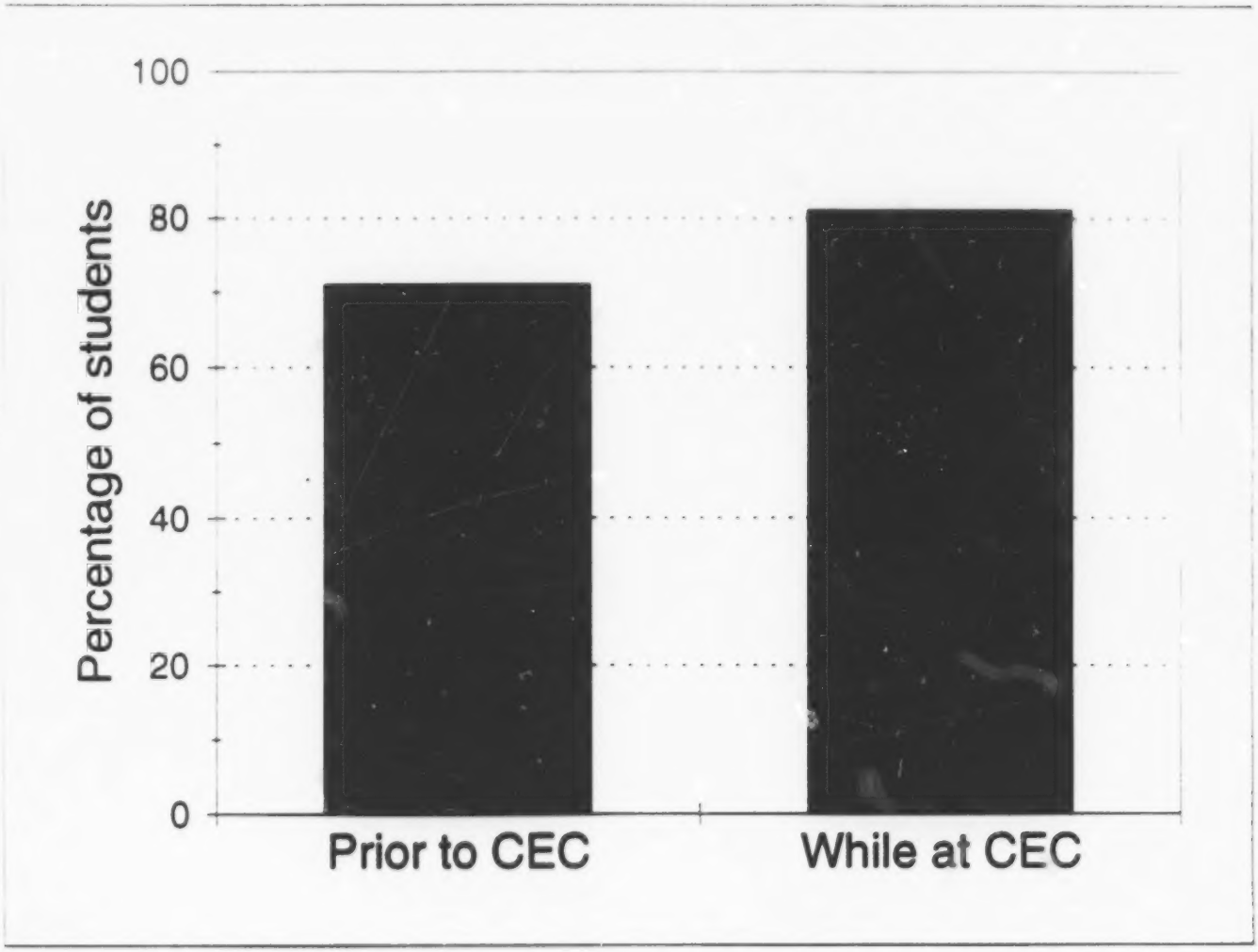


Figure 3

Number of Cultural Arts Activities Students Attended
Prior to CEC and While at CEC

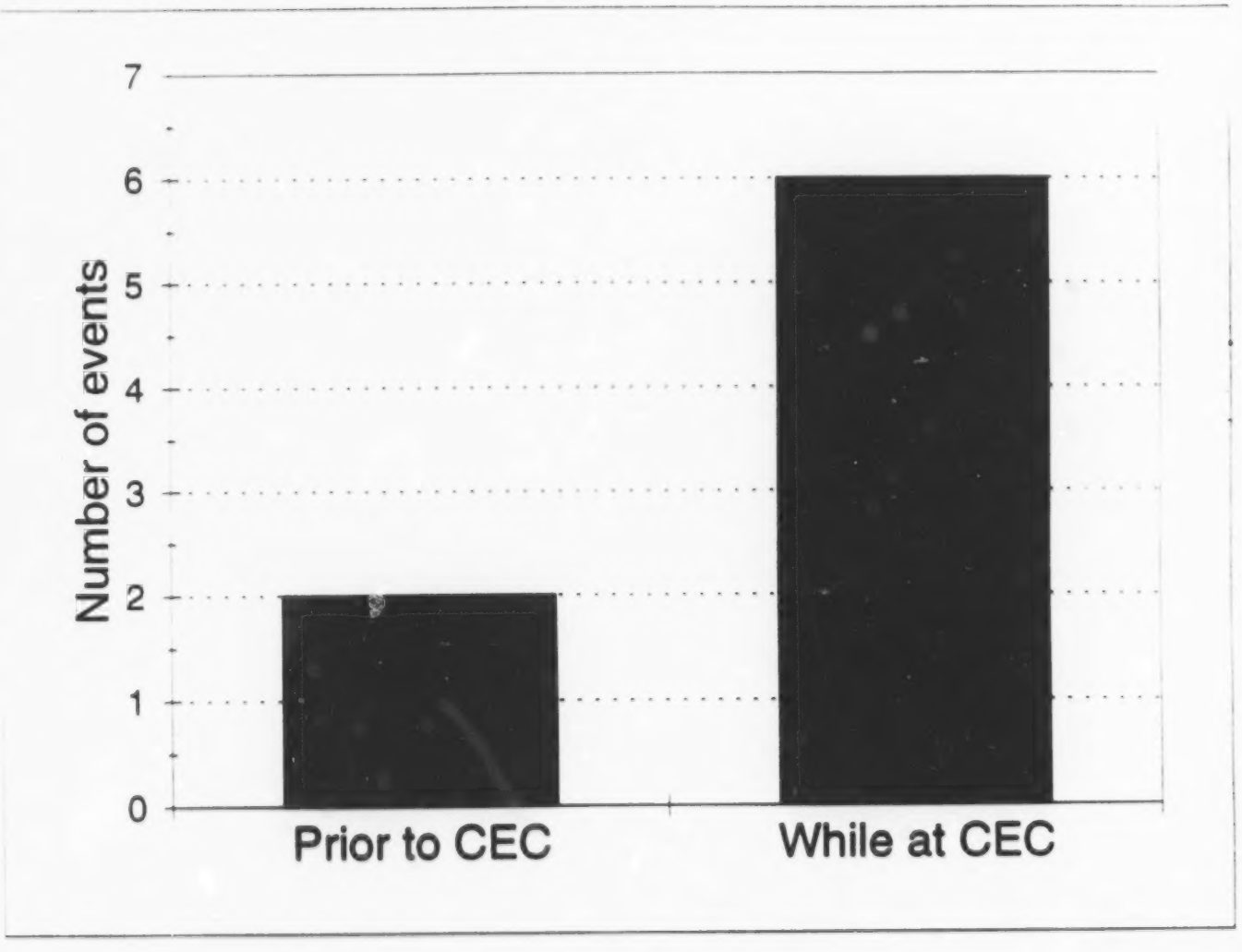


Figure 4

Number of After-School Activities Students Attended
Prior to CEC and While at CEC

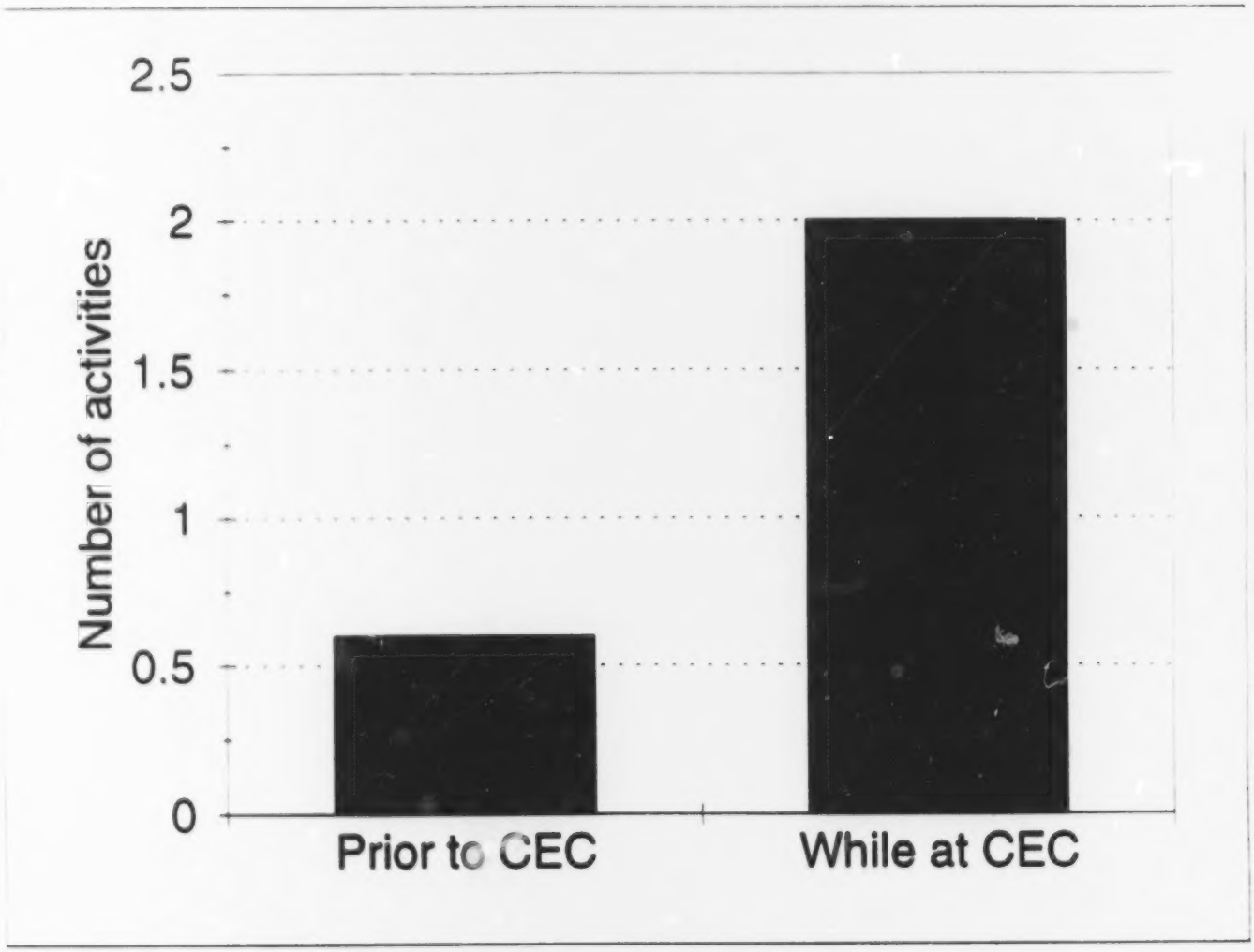


Figure 2 presents the percentage of students who reported receiving computer experience prior to CEC and while at CEC. While many students reported having some kind of computer experience and/or training prior to CEC (71 percent), even more (81 percent) reported receiving computer-assisted instructional activities while at CEC.

Figure 3 presents the number of cultural arts events students attended prior to CEC and while at a CEC program. While students reported attending an average of two cultural arts events prior to their enrollment in a CEC program, during the time they were enrolled in CEC, they reported attending an average of six cultural arts events. The same trend is apparent in Figure 4, which presents data on the number of after-school activities attended by students. On average, students attended more after-school activities while at CEC (two). The increase in participation in activities and events is especially significant in light of the fact that students were asked to make a comparison between what took place before participation at CEC, in effect, over the course of their lives, and during the time at a CEC program, which is over the course of, on average two years.

QUANTITATIVE STUDENT DATA

OER requested that the CEC personnel responsible for student information complete end-of-the-year forms pertaining to 15-20 students at each of the 7 sites visited. Information collected included program status, parental status, work status, and attendance data. OER received 130 completed forms for 62 males

and 68 females. Thirty-three percent were reported to be pre-G.E.D.-tracked, 41 percent were G.E.D. tracked, and 26 percent were H.S. diploma-tracked students. No students were reported to be working full-time and only two percent were reported to be working part-time. Thirty-five percent were reported to be parents.

Attendance Rate

Figure 5 shows the average attendance rate from January to May 1994 of this sample of CEC students. The data demonstrate that attendance was quite high and stable during this time frame. It is interesting, although not surprising to note, that the attendance rate of the students at the Adolescent Alternative Day Program--where students do not live on-site, was much lower than at any of the other CEC sites visited. Many staff members believed that attendance is exceptionally high in the CEC program because the majority of students live on-site. Whether this is due to the fact that there is more accountability for students living on-site or simply that it's easier and more convenient to attend classes, is unclear. Given the fact that attendance is an important and readily obtainable measure of project success, high levels of attendance suggest that CEC has been successful in taking formerly truant adolescents and turning them into regularly attending students.

Regents Competency Test (R.C.T.) Passing Rates

Figure 6 presents the passing rates of students who have taken R.C.T. examinations by subject area. This figure

Figure 5

Average Student Attendance Rate by Month by Site

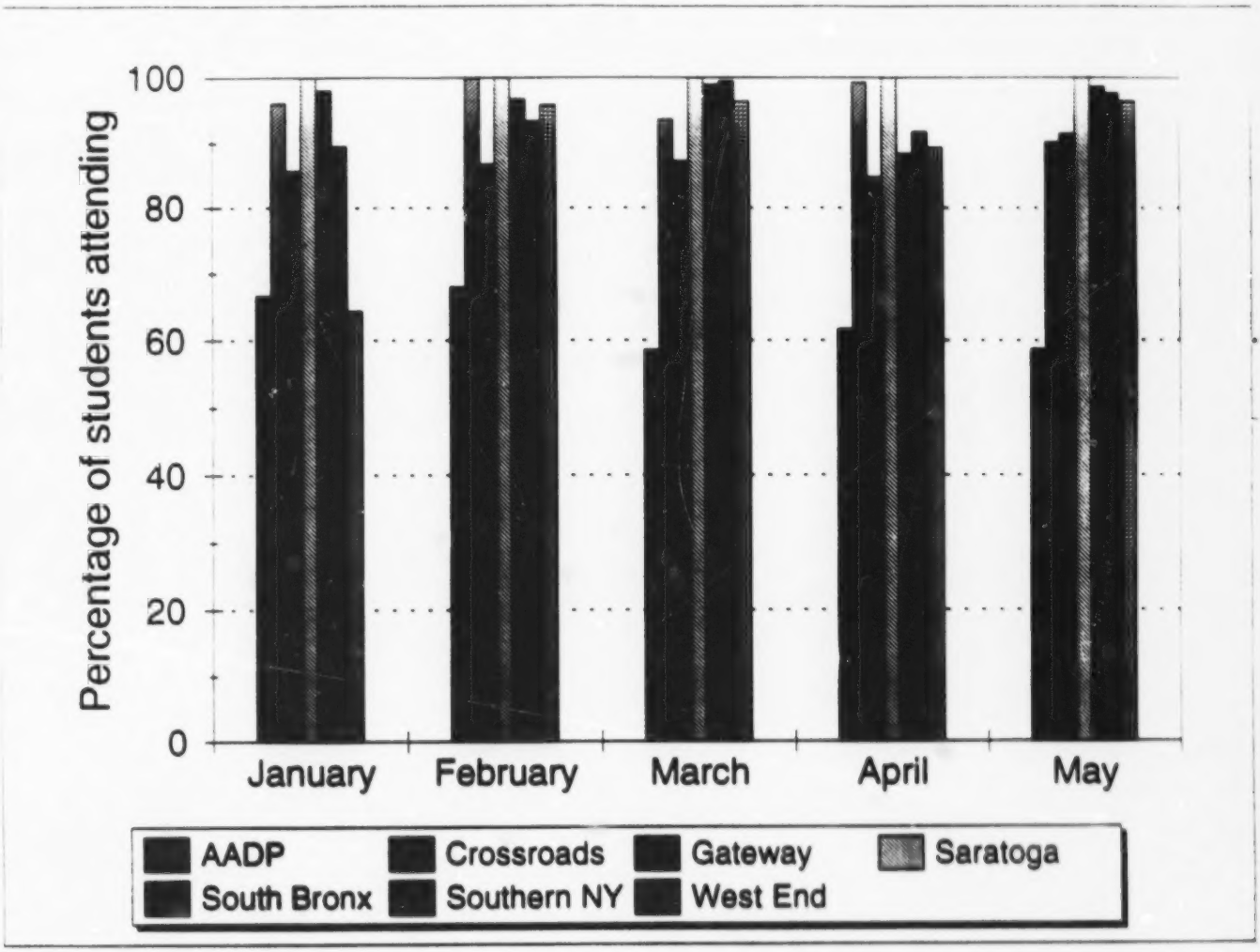
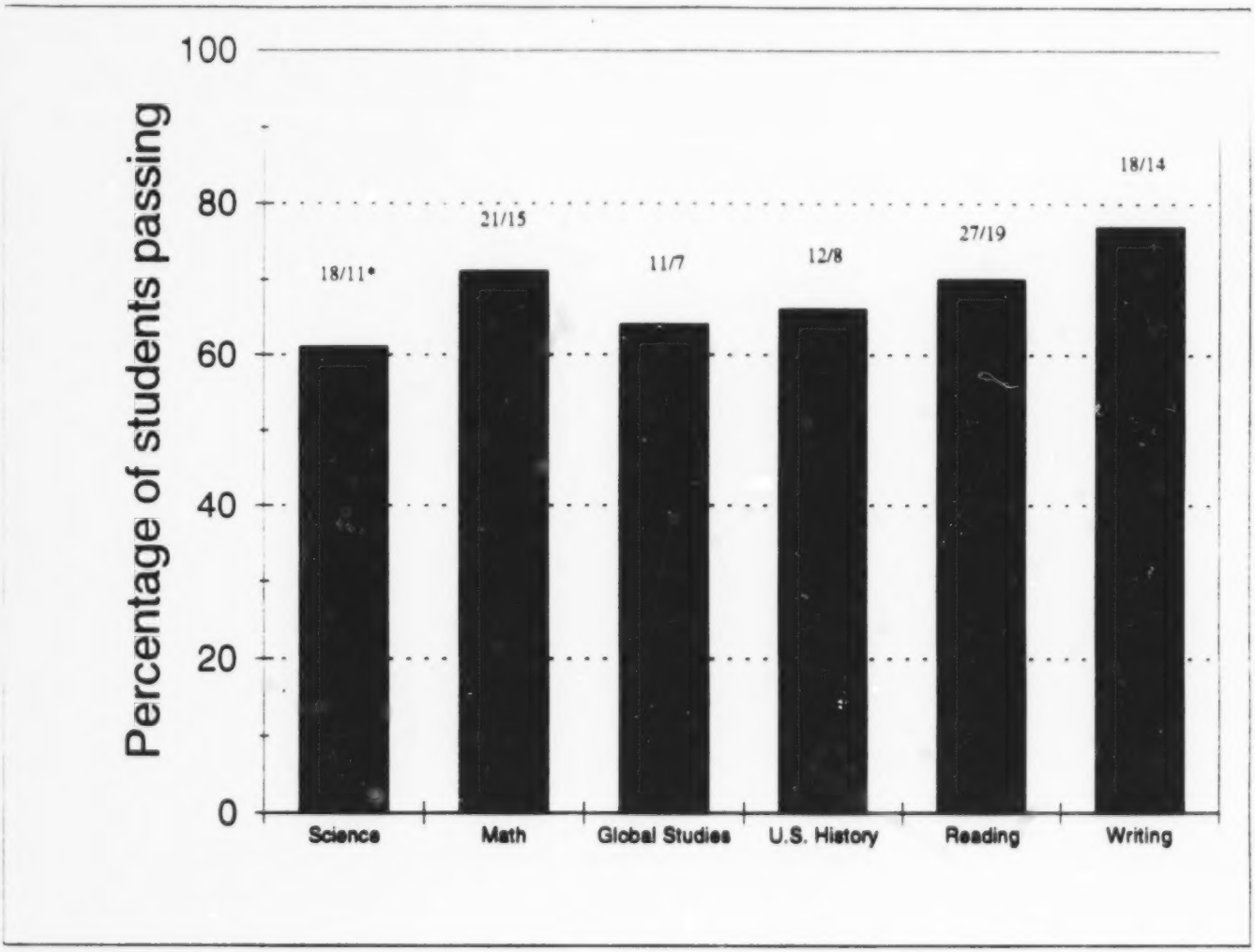


Figure 6

Regents Competency Test Rates
by Subject Area



*The number above the bar and to the left indicates the number of students who took the R.C.T. in that particular subject area and the number to the right indicates the number of students who passed.

demonstrates that over 50 percent of the students who have taken an R.C.T. passed it. It should be noted that the number of students taking the R.C.T.s is low due to the fact that less than eight percent of CEC students are diploma bound.

G.E.D. Passing Rates and High School Diplomas Awarded

CEC provided OER with statistics on G.E.D. passing rates for the 1992-93 school year and for the 1993-94 school year. During the 1992-93 school year of the 207 students who took the G.E.D. exam, 158 passed (76 percent passing rate) and during the 1993-94 school year of the 210 students who took the G.E.D. exam, 162 passed (77 percent passing rate). It should be noted that it is particularly difficult to collect hard data on the CEC program because many of the students who are in G.E.D. programs are in homeless shelters, and sometimes make the transistion to permanent housing and other schools/institutions fairly quickly. The CEC program also reported that three high school diplomas were awarded during the 1993-94 school year.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings summarized in this report come from the interviews conducted with CEC staff, students, and agency personnel and from student records of attendance and academic progress from seven CEC sites. The evaluation was designed to obtain the broadest possible look at the implementation of the CEC program.

Overall, the CEC program is a highly successful alternative educational program serving the needs of adolescents, who for a variety of reasons are in need of such services. The majority of CEC staff have long and extensive backgrounds in education and are described as seasoned teaching professionals who are able, because of their abilities, to work with special populations of adolescents and help them succeed. Classes are significantly smaller in the CEC program; teachers are therefore better and more quickly able to assess their students' strengths and weaknesses. This facilitates individualizing the curriculum to better meet the needs of all students and providing learning experiences which result in academic success.

As a successful program, CEC has many strengths and few weaknesses. A major strength of CEC is in the programs and activities they have developed for students. One such program is the School Business Collaborative program in which CEC has formed collaborations with an extensive array of businesses, community-based organizations, and other outside agencies. These collaboratives are part of CEC's philosophy that students are

better educated and better served if there is an integration between vocational and academic education. CEC has also developed an extensive cultural arts program which connects with theater groups throughout the city. The goal of this program is to increase the quality and effectiveness of CEC's educational programs and to develop curricula focusing on the application of the arts outside of the school setting. CEC was also one of the first SBM/SDM schools in the city because of their belief that students, parents, staff, community, outside agencies, and business partners all working together will improve the quality of student academic and vocational learning outcomes.

Another major strength of the program is the smooth working collaborations that exist among personnel, an astounding accomplishment given the fact that CEC staff are scattered throughout the city working at many different sites, in different types of environments, and with very diverse populations of students. These relationships are rooted in a common philosophy and goal regarding students. CEC staff believe that all children can learn and be successful and that they as teaching professionals can help make a difference in students' lives. The roles performed and the responsibilities assumed by CEC personnel are therefore diverse. Much of the credit for the success of the CEC program is given to the principal. She is described by her staff as being a dynamic and energetic administrator and is credited with empowering her staff and setting a tone of creativity and collaboration.

Another strength of the CEC program is the positive relationships that exist between CEC staff and the on-site agencies. Overwhelmingly, the staff felt that this was a facilitating factor to their success. Agency personnel stated that they selected CEC to provide the educational component of their programs because of their belief that CEC educators could best serve the students, "experienced city teachers, teaching city kids." This relationship has proven to be crucial to the success of the CEC program and to the success of the students.

Yet another program strength is that the relationship between the CEC program and the Alternative High School Superintendent's office works extremely well. The superintendent demonstrates his support of CEC by giving them the room to be creative and by approving the programs they've developed. The staff at the superintendent's office are also credited with being extremely helpful.

Project success was measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. Staff believe success is evidenced by the increasing numbers of students obtaining their G.E.D.s or receiving their high school diplomas, improving their mathematics and reading scores, going on to postsecondary education or advanced career training, obtaining permanent employment, and receiving permanent housing. Perhaps the most significant improvement noted is the increase in attendance. Improvements in self-esteem and attitudes were also observed. Increases in these areas are especially significant to the staff because they are

crucial to success in the short-term, through improved attendance and grades, and in the long-term, through the ability of students to implement future plans. While student measures of project success were foremost mentioned, morale is reportedly extremely high among staff members.

Overwhelmingly, agency and CEC staff asserted that students' attitudes towards the CEC program are very positive. Moreover, this is attributed to the high quality of the relationships between the students and the CEC staff. Students concurred with this perception stating that the teachers care about them and spend much time with them, often giving them individualized attention. Students, like teachers, believe that smaller class size is advantageous; it facilitated their ability to better and more quickly get to know the teachers.

Student comments illustrated that they were dismayed that the program was short-term and that the school day was not long enough. The majority of the students stated that they would complete their high school education in the CEC program, believing the environment to be more conducive to learning than they previously experienced in a traditional high school setting. Students also had clear and ambitious goals for their futures. Many indicated that they intended on going to college and listed a variety of possible career choices they planned to pursue with a college degree.

Another indication of the success students are experiencing in the CEC program is in the increase in their participation in

activities and events. They reported participating in more computer-assisted instructional activities and attending more cultural arts and after-school events while at CEC than they did prior to CEC.

In general, the quantitative student data presented a similar picture of success as did the opinions and perceptions. Attendance data from a random sample of students at the seven visited sites revealed that attendance was quite high and stable during the time frame investigated. This is an especially significant finding given the fact that these students, prior to coming to CEC, were either truant or had dropped out of high school completely. It is a feasible assumption that providing the educational component at the site where students live promotes regular attendance. In contrast, attendance was markedly lower at the site where students must commute to school everyday.

While the number of students taking the R.C.T. exams is low, over 50 percent of the students who have taken the exam have passed. This is true of all R.C.T. subject areas. It should be noted that the reason the number of students taking the R.C.T.s is low is due to the fact that less than eight percent of CEC students are diploma bound. In the 1993-94 school year, a similar number of students had passed the G.E.D. exam as had passed in the previous year. Three students were reported to have earned their high school diplomas. It was also reported that students have experienced excessive delays in receiving

notification of G.E.D. test results from the State Education Department. This has caused them hardships in terms of job placement or admission to college or trade schools.

While staff were able to consider the short-term successes of students, knowledge of long-term successes was limited. Staff generally believe that students leave the program with the necessary skills to help them lead productive lives. However, many staff members feared that without the constant encouragement and support which students receive while in the program, many of them would not sustain the positive advances that they made. Once students leave the CEC/agency program, follow-up assessments are generally not performed. Both CEC and the agencies admit this is a short-coming however, lack of resources in both personnel and funding make follow-up impossible. Follow-up has therefore been limited to informal progress reports from former students on the initiative of the student.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, OER offers recommendations that underscore successful program practices and the problem areas that need to be addressed. However, it should be recognized that the resolution of some of these problems is not within CEC's power but must be addressed by the appropriate agency/bureaucracy and/or is dependent on additional funding. OER makes the following recommendations with these constraints in mind:

- Continue to establish collaboratives with outside agencies, businesses, and community-based organizations. The present extensive collaboratives

have significantly improved student academic performance, self-esteem, and behaviors.

- Continue facilitating the positive working relationships and collaborations among CEC staff and between the CEC program and agency personnel. This can be accomplished through staff/agency development days, cultural arts events, and program-wide activities, such as the yearly multicultural event.

- Improve the notification to students of G.E.D. test results. CEC and the individual agencies should work in conjunction with the State Education Department to help facilitate this process.

- Improve follow-up procedures in conjunction with the individual agencies on students who have completed the program. Knowledge about how former students are faring on their own would be invaluable to future implementation and might help to insure sustained success.